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ABSTRACT

School boards significantly contribute to the future of education. There are three major elements regarding the role of school board members. First, demographic changes may illuminate school board members to their tasks. Demography reveals changes in family status. For instance, more children live with only one parent, more children are illegitimate, and more children have teen-aged mothers. Demography also indicates changes in certain areas. For example, enrollment is increasing on all educational levels in 12 states, whereas secondary school enrollment continues to decrease in other states. Finally, demography reveals changes in education, such as a greater number of college graduates and rigid high school graduation requirements in 43 states. The effects of demographic changes on education include an increase of school children living with only one parent, school children with teen-aged mothers, school children who were born prematurely, and the accompanying learning difficulties. The second component concerning the school board members' role is leadership qualities. Chester I. Barnard's five basic leadership qualities are vitality and endurance, calculated decisiveness, persuasiveness, responsibility, and intelligence. Leaders must handle both tasks and relationships efficiently. The third element of the board members' role is genuine concern and commitment to education. (RG)

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THE NEW AMERICA FOR THE THIRD MILLENIUM

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THE NEW AMERICA FOR THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

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INTRODUCTION

It is a joy to once again be with you, the members of the Louisiana School Boards Association. I recall with fond memories the dynamic and sharing experiences we've had in the past. They have ranged from the bayou and coon-ass country to the North and Central parts of Louisiana. This is a great state, and your Association is one of the most dynamic, significant school boards associations in the United States. During the past twenty years, it has been my opportunity to work with many of you as board members and in many of your parishes, and with numerous universities in Louisiana. Just a year ago I saw a number of you at the conference sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches.

Of course, I'm sure you realize that you are the key to the future of education in the great state of Louisiana. School boards, with all the criticism they engender, are still the key elements in determining the future of education in our society.

Shortly, we will enter the third millennium. The year 2000 will be upon us, and a new one thousand years will be ahead of us. The two thousand years which have elapsed since the birth of Christ, have indeed been years of dramatic and unbelievable human change. Even in the short lifespan of those of us in this audience, the compounding rate of change has overwhelmed every one of us. Our means of transportation, our means of communication, the potential for world tension and destruction, the potential for the betterment of humankind; all of these plague us in ways that humans could not have dreamt possible in 1 A.D.

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On this occasion, I would like to address three facets that I believe are significant to our roles as leaders in education. First, changes which are occurring in the demographics of education in our society. Second, what I believe to be the qualities of leadership which must be characteristic of each of our school boards as we seek to address the spectrum of reform movements characteristic of American education. And third, a sense of "caring," which I believe must dominate all of our actions and decisions.

THE EMERGING DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

All of the reports on how to improve education don't tell us much about how to relate access and quality. In the minds of many people, including state legislators, access and quality are like two sides of a teeter-totter. They argue the problem in the last twenty years is that we have focused exclusively on access, and that's why quality has gone down. And, therefore, for the next twenty years, we have to simply redress the balance. And if we want to improve our quality, access must, by definition, decline.

This kind of thinking strikes me as being somewhat characteristic of some state-level thought about how education ought to be improved. It seems to me that the answer is obvious: we work on both at the same time. That's what we've always done in this country; and the results have been enormously successful. After all, we are the most powerful, significant nation on the face of this planet today.

Educational reforms occur in cycles, but the importance of looking at the environment on a regular basis can hardly be over-emphasized. My theory in perspective is a simple one. It is that the future is here, if we can just learn how to see it - because the future leaves its tracks in the present in some very interesting and clear ways, once we learn how to look for it. Demography, then, is a highly important factor in helping decide what each of

us must do as board members and leaders in education.

Here is one way to look at the future for education. There are eighty million households in the United States today. There are 30,000 people over 100 years of age in the United States. That group will clearly double in the next ten years, if not triple.

There are a lot of problems in adjusting to sex roles. Forty percent of supermarket shoppers are male. Thirty percent of General Motors car customers are female.

Fifty percent of the American population is in the Eastern time zone. The majority interest in the United States are East of the Mississippi, and will remain so.

We also know that certain parts of the country are projected to grow at very great rates. As a result, schools in these various parts of the country are going to be very different in terms of their planning for the future.

Family Status

Major changes have taken place in the ways we live together. In 1955, sixty percent of the households in the United States consisted of a working father, a housewife mother, and two or more school-aged children. In 1980, that family was only eleven percent of our homes. And in 1985, it is seven percent, an astonishing change. Just think of this and what it means.

Only seven percent of the children who attend our schools live in households consisting of a working father, housewife mother, and two or more school-aged children. Instead, there is a very large population of individuals without any direct family involvement. They are not very likely to have children in the public schools. And that's the biggest single increase in households in the United States. Of the eighty million households today, almost twenty million consist of people living alone. The Census tells us that fifty-

nine percent of the children born in 1983 will live with only one parent before reaching age 18 - this now becomes the normal childhood experience. Of every 100 children born today:

- 12 will be born out of wedlock
- 40 will be born to parents who divorce before the child is 18
- 5 will be born to parents who separate
- 2 will be born to parents of whom one will die before the child reaches 18
- 41 will reach age 18 "normally."

The United States today is confronted with an epidemic increase in the number of children born outside of marriage - and fifty percent of such children are born to teen-aged mothers. Although the percentage of black teen-aged girls who have children outside of marriage is higher than that of white girls, comparisons with other nations indicate that a white teen-aged female in the United States is twice as likely to give birth outside of marriage as in any other nation studied. The situation is most frightening with very young mothers, aged 13 and 14. Indeed, every day in America, forty teen-aged girls give birth to their third child. To be the third child of a child is to be very much "at risk" in terms of one's future. There is a particular aspect of the situation that is vital - teen-aged mothers tend to give birth to children who are premature. This means that about 700,000 babies of the annual cohort, around 3.3 million births, are almost assured of being either educationally retarded, or "difficult to teach." This group is entering the educational continuum in rapidly increasing numbers.

Today, almost half of the poor in the United States are children. We are a nation of 14.6 million Hispanics, and 26.5 million Blacks. But by 2020, we will be a nation of 44 million Blacks, and 47 million Hispanics. The total U.S. population for 2020 will be about 265 million people, a very small increase

from our current 238 million - and more than 91 million of that figure will be minorities. Around the year 2000, just 14 years away, America will be a nation in which one of every three of us will be non-white.

Region

The national decline of about thirteen percent of public school students in the 1970-1980 decade breaks down to zero decline in about twelve "Sun Belt" states, and over twenty-five percent in some "Frost Belt" states. There will be two major educational agendas for the next decade: (1) Planning for growth (Kindergarten through graduate school) in twelve states; and (2) planning for continuing declines in secondary school populations in most of the rest.

Education

Over 18,000 doctorates will be awarded in the humanities during the 1980's, with only a "handful" of jobs available for them in teaching. In all United States graduate engineering programs, forty-three percent of the students today are foreign. Thirty-six percent of all math and computer science graduate students are foreign. Of the current group of college students, one in five will graduate and work in a job that requires no college education at all. In 1972, one in seven workers had a college degree, while in 1982, one worker in four did. The problem is not a decline in "quality" jobs. It's rather an increase in the number of college graduates from 575,000 per year entering the workforce late during the 1960's, to 1.4 million college graduates going to work annually during the 1970's. The problem may be alleviated during the next decade due to the decline of about five million youths in the 18-24-year-old cohort, which may bring educational supply and drop demand into better balance.

Our public schools have now finished a major season of state-based education reforms. As of February, 1985:

- 43 states have strengthened high school graduation requirements, including 15 that require exit tests of high school seniors
- 14 states have adopted some version of merit pay
- 37 will attempt to lure the best college students into teaching through scholarships and other incentives
- Although standards have been made tougher, only a handful of states have appropriated additional monies for the counseling and remediation of those who will need assistance in reaching the standards.

Summary

Let me quickly summarize what I perceive to be the education consequences of significant demographic changes which face us in America today, and will face us for the next 35-40 years:

1. More children will enter school from poverty households.
2. More children entering school will come from single-parent households.
3. More of the children in our public schools will come from minority backgrounds.
4. There will be a larger number of children who were premature babies, leading to more learning difficulties in school.
5. More "latch-key" children, and children from "blended" families, as the result of remarriage of one original parent.
6. More children from teen-aged mothers.
7. A continuing decline of the level of retention through high school graduation in virtually all states.
8. A continued drop in the number of high school graduates concentrated most heavily in the northeast.

9. A major increase in part-time college students, a decline of about 1 million in full-time students. (About 12 million students currently, only about 2 million are full-time, in residence, and 18-22 years of age).
10. A continuing increase in the number of college graduates who will get a job which requires no college degree. Currently twenty percent of all college graduates.
11. Major increases in adult and continuing education outside of college in a university setting - by business, by government, by other non-profits such as United Way, and by for-profit, "franchise" groups, such as Bell and Howell schools, and the Learning Annex.
12. Increased percentage of workers with a college degree (from 1 in 7 to 1 in 4 today).

OUR ROLE AS LEADERS IN EDUCATION

What does this array of endless statistics and figures mean for those of us who are responsible for the school systems in such fine states as Louisiana? These translate into characteristics of leaders, the characteristics that are so essential and vital for quality education as we move into the third millennium. I believe the challenges which face this great state, as well as Texas and California and New York and Illinois and the rest of our country, are primarily those of leadership.

As leaders in the state of Louisiana, you have been experiencing trauma as legislators pass new school requirements, new requirements aimed at Boards and membership on Boards, and confusion seems to prevail at times, rather than the orderly, sequential, logical patterns we have known in the past. But from the chaos and the confusion, strong leadership will enable us to emerge with a new level of quality, higher and more productive standards than we have known in the past.

I frequently ask myself, as I'll ask you on this occasion, are you a leader? Do you have the intelligence, the drive, the talent, the interpersonal and political skills necessary in the executive suite, or to run your own business, which are equally necessary, to provide effective leadership for schools. I believe most of you do, or you would not have been elected to your present positions of major responsibility.

I have been attempting to review carefully the complex picture and the complex subject of leadership. Among the books I have enjoyed are Chester I. Barnard's book, Organization and Management. Barnard lists five fundamental characteristics of people who are leaders, in their order of importance: (1) Vitality and endurance. I don't think he means twenty-four hours a day, twelve months a year, but some balance. (2) Decisiveness. Not a harem-scarum, opinionated, quick-vote, but a carefully-deliberated decisiveness. (3) Persuasiveness. The ability to arrive at a sound point of view, and convince others of its merit. (4) Responsibility, which I'm sure each of you carry out to the "nth" degree. And (5) Intellectual Capacity.

Many of the books on leadership in recent years, growing out of the corporate structure, have focused on two spectrums of leadership. One is relationship-oriented; the other is task-oriented, and they hinge on one another. For example, some leaders, some board members, are good at details, organizing, getting the job done. Other board members are more adept at relationships, motivating people and understanding what they are doing. A good board member, I believe, does well in both dimensions, for one without the other is insufficient. It is, of course, important to pay attention to relationships. Good board members compliment leaders in their schools, teachers, administrators, and children, as well as citizens, and thank them for a job well-done, with the result that morale is more likely to remain

high. Most management theorists agree that the best leaders, the best board members, are those who can do both: create a congenial atmosphere throughout the school system, and also get the task of quality education, sound policy decision-making, done efficiently.

OUR CARING CAPACITIES

Perhaps the most significant consideration, even beyond demography and qualities of leadership, is a deep sense of commitment, a personal commitment, to quality education. I don't know how you get this. I have explored it in my own case and constantly ask myself, "What is the nature of my commitment to education?" A junior or senior high school or an elementary school is a direct reflection of the shadow of its leader, its principal, and the quality of its Board of Education. The commitment, the concerns, the sense of purpose of these individuals, are key factors in determining the entire direction in which schools move.

When you have known me for as long as Jimmy Prescott, Art Greene, Joe Davies, Boo Jones, Tommy Warner, and a few others here - we do go back about twenty years - you know that I have been challenged for much of my life by the assault of men and women on high mountains. In 1964 I was part of the support group which worked across this great land to raise some $400,000 for the American assault on Mount Everest. Just prior to that climb, one evening I relaxed in a hotel in San Francisco on the eve of the departure of the American Mount Everest team. As we sang songs, such as "Climb Every Mountain," I sat across the table from one of America's great young climbers, Jake Breitenbach from Colorado Springs. Jake showed a sense of commitment, a sense of daring, a sense of challenge of the mountain which few young men exhibit. Yet today, Jake lies under 90 tons of ice at the foot of that mountain. One evening at dusk, I stood in the shadows of the greatest

mountains in the world - the Himalayas. I sought to see Chomolungma, the Goddess Mother of the World, or Mount Everest. I thought of the challenge of the mountain. The challenge of climbing not the foothills, but the high mountain peaks. I thought of the comment of Barry Bishop, with his frozen toes removed after he had climbed the mountain, "The task is never complete. The mission is achieved only momentarily." And then I thought of our role in education. Each generation brings with it new challenges. Each generation demands a new sense of commitment. All about us are the mountain peaks of ignorance and of apathy. Our challenge is: Will we tackle the mountains of ignorance which surround us, or will we be content to live in the valleys of senility.

In many ways, I believe the vitality and endurance which are necessary to be a strong leader and school board member, trustee, are not significantly different from that which it takes to climb Chomolungma, the Goddess Mother of the World as the Sherpas know it, or Mount Everest, as we know it. My hope and trust is that God will give us the strength, the vision, the determination, to climb the educational challenges which face us. Thanks so much for the opportunity of being with you.

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